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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000849

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY
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SUBJECT: DARFUR: STATUS OF THE SPLM INITIATIVE

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Classified By: CDA R. Powers, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

11. (C) Recent meetings with First Vice President Salva Kiir, SPLM insider Luka Biong Deng, and SPLM Darfur Task Force members have underscored the SPLM's intention to bring DPA non-signatories to Southern Sudan to prepare them for negotiations with the Sudanese Government. Though the SPLM views the DPA as the foundation for the negotiating process, Kiir sees Eritrea leading formal talks between the NCP and the Darfur movements following the meeting in Southern Sudan. Divergent views emerged on the role of the UN and AU, the timing and structure for the Southern Sudan meeting, and the need for U.S. financial and logistical support for the SPLM effort. The SPLM provided no definitive response on USG suggestions of a "shuttle diplomacy" approach in lieu of formal talks, though all welcomed the role of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in the mediation process. End summary.

SPLM Prepares Darfurians for Negotiations

12. (C) Throughout recent discussions with Embassy officials, senior representatives of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), including First Vice President Salva Kiir and Minister in the Office of the President of the Government of Southern Sudan Luka Biong Deng, described a clear proposal to bring Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatories to Southern Sudan to prepare them for formal negotiations with the National Congress Party (NCP). SPLM Darfur Task Force Secretary Dr. Achier Deng Akol told Acting CG Juba on May 28

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that though the announced venue was Juba it would be held in Rumbek for security reasons. He also reported that Kiir had asked the Task Force to consider retired Kenyan general Lazarus Sumbeiywo to chair the conference. (Note: In subsequent meetings with Embassy officials, Kiir also mentioned former Vice President Abel Alier and former Foreign Minister Francis Deng as possible chairmen. End note.)

13. (C) The SPLM leaders asserted that the DPA would be the foundation for any political process and that the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) led by Senior Assistant to the President Minni Minawi would play a key role in the Southern Sudan meeting. Kiir warned that the political crisis facing

the SLM could not continue much longer before Minawi returned to the field. Though the NCP had given preliminary approval for the SPLM to host the meeting, Kiir worried that the NCP would undermine the initiative to prevent the SPLM from gaining popularity in Darfur--and Darfurian votes in the 2009 election.

Inconsistent SPLM Views

14. (C) SPLM officials held inconsistent views on the timing and structure of the Southern Sudan meeting and the support it would require from the international community. Darfur Task Force secretary Dr. Achier told Acting CG Juba that the original June 4 preparatory meeting between the SPLM and international stakeholders--including the UN, AU, EU, and U.S.--and main June 11 meeting would each be postponed by one week. After returning from a fact-finding trip to Darfur, however, Task Force member Edward Lino informed Poloff on May 31 that the original meeting dates would hold. While Kiir and Biong suggested that the Southern Sudan meeting would concentrate on representatives from the Darfur rebel factions, Lino indicated that it would include a significant number of Darfur civil society activists and Arab tribal leaders.

15. (C) SPLM task force members in Juba requested immediate logistical support from the USG, such as computers, Internet connectivity, prefab containers to house a secretariat, and "expert" advisors to organize the conference and direct the process, a request seconded by a Juba-based UN political advisor. UN and AU officials in Khartoum, however, informed the Embassy that they would coordinate all support for the SPLM initiative and were engaged in negotiations with the Task Force on the specifics of such support. Lino later explained that all requests for support could wait until the June 4 preparatory meeting with international stakeholders as the SPLM Task Force members were now "scattered" throughout

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Sudan and Task Force chairman Clement Janda was in Asmara.

16. (C) Differences in opinion on the expected outcome of the Southern Sudan meeting also emerged. While Kiir and Biong stated that they aimed to help the non-signatories to develop a more organized internal structure and common positions on key issues such as power-sharing and compensation, Lino envisaged a more ambitious outcome: a single Darfurian leader representing the various tribes, including disaffected Arabs, and supported by a solid Darfurian negotiating team. (Note: The divergent views on timing, structure, and outcome of the SPLM conference are illustrative of an overall leadership gap in the Task Force. Biong acknowledged Janda's weaknesses and said that Kiir would take a more direct role in the process. He also said that SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amun and SPLM Deputy Sector General for the Northern Sector Yassir Arman--two of the best political minds in the movement--should participate in the process. End note.)

Eritrea to Lead Final Talks

17. (C) Kiir explained that the SPLM planned to prepare the non-signatories for the "negotiating table" and then Eritrea would convene formal talks between the Darfur rebel movements and the NCP, which he had discussed with President Isaias during his recent visit to Juba. "Eritrea will be the best option because they have been supporting these people (the non-signatories)," said Kiir. He would encourage Eritrea to coordinate with the UN and AU but warned that Asmara would not accept "the problem being addressed by anybody else in their absence." Kiir stated that Chad was supportive of an Eritrean role because of their mutual backing for the Darfur rebels. The First Vice President said that he would attempt

to reconcile Tripoli and Asmara on this issue as he had done on the Eastern Sudan talks.

Shuttle Diplomacy

¶18. (C) Embassy officials said that the USG did not think formal talks were necessary as the majority of objections to the DPA were symbolic rather than substantive. Instead, the USG favored a "shuttle diplomacy" approach that would facilitate agreement between the Darfur factions and the NCP on a few key issues and then bring the parties together to sign the final document. Noting that the Tripoli Consensus gave the UN and AU the lead role on the political process, Embassy officials said the USG would have difficulty supporting negotiations led by Eritrea. Though Kiir provided no direct comment on the shuttle diplomacy concept, Biong was enthusiastic and said that the final structure of the negotiation phase could be discussed at the Southern Sudan conference. Biong also said that "UN/AU mediation is definitely the best for all of us."

Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

¶19. (C) Embassy officials outlined the proposal from the Geneva-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) to bring Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) representatives outside of Sudan in the near future and facilitate discussions among the factions to achieve greater unity. They explained that the HD initiative would set the stage for the meeting in Southern Sudan and that holding it outside the country would ease the participation of Abdul Wahid al-Nur. Kiir, Biong, and Lino were enthusiastic about the HD proposal, expressed a willingness to coordinate with the organization, and suggested that it could also play a valuable role supporting the SPLM conference. Biong asked if HD would "critique" the SPLM's proposal based on its more in-depth understanding of the political dynamics among the non-signatories. Kiir welcomed efforts to bring Abdul Wahid back into the political process and asked that the USG pressure him to attend the SPLM conference.

Comment

¶10. (C) While the power brokers in the SPLM outline a clear proposal for its role in the Darfur political process, the SPLM Task Force does not seem to operate off the same talking

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points. The USG should continue to use its leverage to bridge the inconsistencies within the SPLM on its initiative and between the SPLM and the UN/AU on the political process. In addition, we should continue to facilitate connections between HD and the SPLM, which can benefit from the organization's contacts with Darfur political actors. Given the mixed signals emerging from the SPLM on the type of assistance required from the international community, the USG should wait to allocate direct support for the SPLM until the party leaders submit a definitive request, provided a mechanism is in place to quickly disburse funds at the appropriate time. End comment.

¶11. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
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